

## Message Text

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DEPT PLEASE PASS CAIRO

E.O.: 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, EG

SUBJ: EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMY'S MEETING  
WITH TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI

REF : (A) STATE 31065, (B) STATE 24935, (C) STATE 24958,  
(D) STATE 24957, (E) TUNIS 747

1. I INFORMED FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI PRIVATELY ON FEBRUARY 19 THAT FAHMY HAD CONVEYED TO US, THROUGH AMBASSADOR EILTS, CHATTI'S CONCERNS REGARDING THREATS POSED BY LIBYA AND ALGERIA, AS WELL AS CHATTI'S REQUEST THAT EGYPTIANS RELAY TO US THIS CONCERN. I ALSO ACQUAINTED CHATTI WITH OUR REPLY TO FAHMY, INDICATING INTER ALIA THAT WE ARE PROPOSING AN INCREASE IN OUR LEVEL OF FMS CREDITS TO TUNISIA AND THAT REGULAR NAVAL VISITS CONTINUE. I VOLUNTEERED THAT THESE VISITS ARE DESIGNED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, TO DEMONSTRATE USG INTEREST IN TUNISIA'S INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY.

2. CHATTI SAID THAT IT WAS NOT HE WHO PROPOSED THAT THE EGYPTIANS RAISE TUNISIAN CONCERNS WITH US, BUT RATHER PRESIDENT SADAT. OBVIOUSLY, CHATTI CONTINUED, TUNISIA IS IN CLOSE AND CONTINUOUS TOUCH WITH THE USG AND NEEDS NO INTERMEDIARY. WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT DURING A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SADAT, ATTENDED BY FAHMY, CHATTI HAD EXPRESSED AN  
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INTEREST IN DEVELOPING A NORTH AFRICAN "STRATEGY" BASED

ON STRONG LINKS BETWEEN TUNISIA AND EGYPT AS A MEANS OF ENCOUNTERING LIBYA AND ALGERIA. "SYNCHRONIZATION" OF THIS STRATEGY, SAID CHATTI, SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE MOROCCO AS THE WESTERN ANCHOR. AT THIS POINT, ACCORDING TO CHATTI, SADAT REFERRED TO CLOSE US/EGYPTIAN RELATIONS AND PROPOSED THAT USG SHOULD DO MORE TO SUPPORT TUNISIA AND STRENGTHEN THIS STRATEGY OF "SYNCHRONIZATION." HE THEREUPON TURNED TO FAHMY AND INSTRUCTED HIM TO SEE AMBASSADOR EILTS FOR PURPOSE OF URGING USG TO DO MORE FOR TUNISIA.

3. CHATTI SMILED AT EGYPTIAN VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED AND COMMENTED THAT WASHINGTON MUST HAVE BEEN "ASTONISHED" AT SUGGESTION THAT TUNISIA WOULD GO THROUGH EGYPT TO GET TO WASHINGTON. AGAIN, HE REPEATED THAT IF GOT HAD ANYTHING TO TELL US, THEY WOULD DO SO DIRECTLY.

4. HAVING SAID THE FOREGOING, CHATTI TOOK ADVANTAGE OF OUR PRIVATE MEETING TO MAKE A PITCH FOR INCREASED US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA. HE SAID THAT OVER YEAR AGO, WHEN TUNISIA HAD PRESENTED USG WITH REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IN U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT, THREAT TO TUNISIA HAD ESSENTIALLY BEEN FROM DIRECTION OF LIBYA. TUNISIA HAD FELT THAT WHILE THIS THREAT REAL, IT SOMEWHAT MITIGATED BY ALGERIAN OPPOSITION TO LIBYA -- WHICH SERVED SOMEWHAT AS A RESTRAINT ON QADHAFI. NOW, HOWEVER, WITH BOUMEDIENNE AND QADHAFI COLLABORATING, ANY SUCH RESTRAINT ON LIBYA IS REMOVED, AND THE LIBYAN THREAT BECOMES MORE ACUTE. CHATTI SAID THAT, FUNDAMENTALLY, TUNISIA DOES NOT EXPECT ALGERIA TO CROSS TUNISIAN BORDER. INSTEAD, BOUMEDIENNE MIGHT GIVE QADHAFI CARTE BLANCHE TO MAKE TROUBLE FOR TUNISIA.

5. COMMENT: AS DEPARTMENT KNOWS, TUNISIANS CONTINUE TO BE AMBIVALENT REGARDING IMPROVING TUNISIA'S MILITARY POSTURE. THEY WANT MORE OF A MILITARY DETERRENT BUT THEY BOTH HESITATE TO DIVERT LIMITED RESOURCES FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARE UNEASY WITH THE THOUGHT THAT BUILDING UP THEIR ARMY MEANS "TAKING IT OUT OF THE CASERNES". BEFORE CONSIDERING INCREASING LEVEL OF FMS CREDITS FURTHER, IN RESPONSE TO CHATTI'S REQUEST, I PROPOSE WE WAIT TO SEE WHAT TUNISIANS DO WITH \$15 MILLION FMS CREDIT WE EXPECT

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TO GIVE THEM THIS FISCAL 1976.  
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